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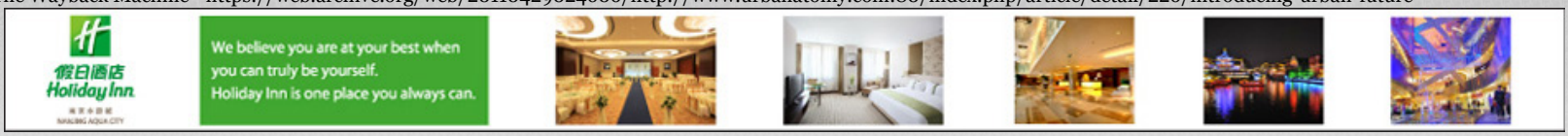

Introducing Urban Future

by nickland @ Tuesday, 29 March 2011 12:57

What can readers expect from this blog? Since it promises to be oriented towards the future, it makes sense to begin with some preliminary forecasting about itself.

Most basically and predictably, Urban Future has been programmed by its name. Its principal topic is the intersection of cities with the future. It aims to foster discussion about cities as engines of the future, and about futurism as a dynamic influence on the shape, character, and development of cities. More particularly, it scavenges for clues, and floats speculations, about the Shanghai of tomorrow. It anticipates a global urban future in which Shanghai features prominently, and a coming Shanghai that expresses, both starkly and subtly, the transformative forces of global futurism. This is to get quite far ahead of ourselves, which is where we shall typically be.

For some readers, 'futurism' will invoke the early 20th century avant garde cultural movement crystallized by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1909 Futurist Manifesto. Futurism, they might reasonably object, has been defined and even closed by the passage of time. Like modernism, it now belongs to the archive of concluded history. What exists today, and in the days to come, can only be a neo-futurism (and a neo-modernism): no less retrospective than prospective, as much a repetition as a speculation. Such considerations, corrections, and recollections, with all their attendant perplexities, are extremely welcome. The time to address them will soon come.

Since Shanghai is cross-hatched with the time-fractured indices of historico-futuristic ambiguity, from paleo-modernism to neo-traditionalism, the blog will have every opportunity to discuss such things. For the moment, casual reference to the strangely-twinned architectural icons of such time-tangles, the Park Hotel and the Jinmao Tower – each a retro-futurist or cybergothic masterpiece – has to substitute as a mnemonic and promissory note.

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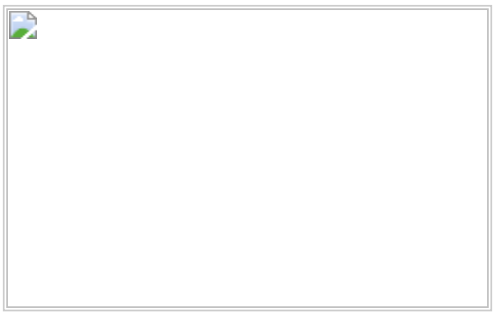

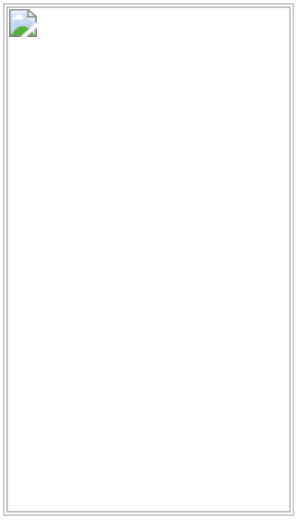

Also, in time, the obstacles to forecasting need to be thoroughly addressed: such topics as histor efficient-market hypothesis (EMH), Karl Popper's critique of historicism, Knightian uncertainty (or Rums and the Black Swan theory of Nassim Nicholas Taleb. In order to get up and running, all these comp temporarily bracketed, like cunning and ferocious beasts, but they will not remain caged forever,

Because there's something irresistibly twisted about starting with the future, the first flurry of po tomorrow, with topics becoming increasingly city- and Shanghai-focused as things progress. An i posts will outline futuristic thinking in broad terms, including preliminary sketches of principal w techno-scientific tradition that supports it.

Ultimately, nothing relevant to the future of Shanghai is alien to this blog's purpose. It will draw upon Shanghai history, geography, and culture, traditional Chinese philosophies of time (Yijing and Daoism), theories of modernity and urbanism, evolutionary biology, science fiction, techno-scientific discussions of complex systems and emergence, the economics of spontaneous order, long waves, technological trends, robotics research and developments, models of accelerating change, and anticipations of Technological Singularity. Things should get continuously weirder.

Tomorrow, it begins.

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